

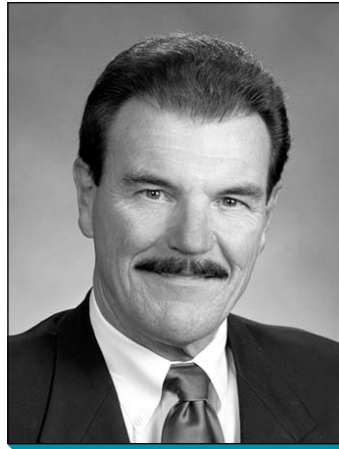
Bill Fromhold

State Representative

49th District

Olympia office:

239 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7924



CAPITOL LETTER:

Legislative Session Preview

Toll-free: 1-800-562-6000

Hearing impaired: 1-800-635-9993

fromhold.bill@leg.wa.gov

<http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/fromhold>

Committees:

Appropriations, Vice Chair

Higher Education

Select Committee on Pension Policy, Chair

January 2006

Dear Fellow Citizen:

The 2006 Legislative session is shaping up to be one of the most important in recent memory. We have urgent challenges to address in educating our children, providing access to affordable health care, and promoting job growth while remaining cautious about spending beyond our means.

During the interim, I attended many meetings with constituents, community groups and Legislative committees to address children's issues, reform our public schools, and work on the needs of our region and state. I look forward to this new opportunity to improve our quality of life.

Ann Tjersland, my senior legislative assistant, and I hope to hear from you on issues or concerns that you care about.

Respectfully,

Bill Fromhold
State Representative
49th Legislative District

2006 Supplemental Budget: Fiscally responsible priorities

As Vice Chair of the Appropriations Committee, I have advocated for fiscally responsible budgets that address critical needs and invest in the future of our state. During this 60-day session, we will write a supplemental budget that accounts for rising costs of existing programs and makes targeted investments on urgent priorities.

This year, our state benefited from the housing market boom, resulting in a \$1.45 billion surplus. Part of this surplus will be dedicated to mandatory spending on cost-of-living increases for teachers due to voter-approved Initiative 732, higher costs for school bus fuel and human services. The vast majority will go into a savings account for pensions and future emergencies. I will also discuss several challenges in this newsletter that cannot wait until 2007.



JANUARY 2006

Representative Bill Fromhold

Washington Learns: Transforming education

The 21st century has brought sweeping changes to our economy and lives. Our most important responsibility in state government is to ensure that our education system can prepare all of our students for success in work and life.

Last year, we increased opportunities for our children to attend college by funding nearly 8,000 new enrollment slots. We also embarked upon a comprehensive 18-month education study, the first such review in at least two decades.

I am a member of the Steering Committee for Washington Learns, where legislators, business people and educators are tackling challenges such as preparing students for the upcoming graduation requirements, closing the achievement gap, and reducing a drop out rate that nears 30 percent. Our goal is to prepare children for the knowledge-based economy by transforming our education system for the 21st century.



common sense adjustments to address concerns and reduce the high-stakes nature of the WASL.

- ⦿ Students can take the test up to four more times;
- ⦿ Retake only sections they did not pass; and
- ⦿ Take an alternative assessment that the Legislature will approve this year.

Although WASL test scores have improved over the years, only 42.8 percent of tenth graders last year passed all three sections. Much work needs to be accomplished to help students learn the skills necessary to succeed. Governor Gregoire has made this a priority in her supplemental budget, which proposes \$38.5 million for summer school, before and after school tutoring, and Saturday school sessions.

Transportation: Our economy on the move

In November, citizens in our region said “no” to traffic gridlock and unsafe streets. We made a serious investment in our economic future and quality of life by rejecting an initiative that would have eliminated critical funding for our transportation infrastructure.

Traffic has become a daily problem for our fast growing region. But your



Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

This year's sophomores are the first class required to pass the WASL before they graduate from high school. To help students who will take the test this spring, we have made

CAPITOL LETTER: Legislative Session Preview

support means nearly \$250 million will go to help ease congestion, keep our economy moving, and improve safety in Clark County. Soon, these projects will make a difference:

- Widening of state Highway 14 through Camas and state Highway 502 west of Battle Ground;
- New interchanges at Interstate 205-18th Street and at state Highway 500-St. Johns Boulevard; and
- Improvements to the Interstate 5-Ridgefield interchange.

Family Security

Establishing a strong social safety net is an important community responsibility. Without adequate support, we all pay for uninsured visits to the emergency room and lament over neglected children we hear about on the evening news.

Many working families and seniors are struggling to cope with rising costs for prescription drugs, medical coverage, and energy. Last year, we increased support for our most vulnerable citizens and made strides toward our goal of providing health care coverage for every child in Washington State by 2010.

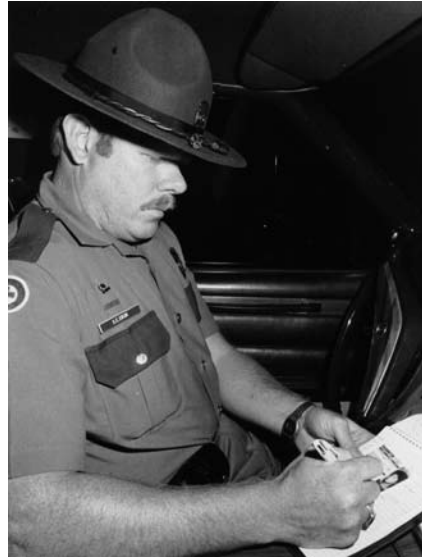
This year, the Legislature will consider proposals by the Governor to strengthen family security by providing additional resources to:

- Support the Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program, which helps heat homes for low-income families and seniors;
- Improve staffing levels in child abuse and neglect programs; and
- Increase funding for the WorkFirst program.



Pension Responsibility

As chair of the Select Committee on Pension Policy, I am responsible for guiding decisions that affect over 445,000 active members and retirees of our state's pension systems. You may have recently read about the state's unfunded pension liability. During the economic downturn, the Leg-



islature cut several billion dollars out of the state operating budget and delayed payments into our pension systems.

Now is the time to pay up. If we want to attract and retain the best school teachers, police officers and public servants, then we must uphold the pension promises we made in prior years. We

will dedicate a significant portion of the budget surplus to the pension system. I strongly support the Governor's proposed Pension Stabilization Account which would dedicate \$127 million for our pension system. The account will make those funds off-limits to everyone and help us achieve the \$1 billion deposit the state actuary projects will be needed for the 2007-09 cycle.

Out of State License Plates

There are estimates that more than 20,000 vehicles belonging to residents of Clark County are instead illegally registered in Oregon. This costs as much as \$20 million in uncollected taxes and fees. A yearlong operation by the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to target these people has brought in over \$450,000. But the WSP cannot spend all its time looking for license plate cheaters when it must fulfill its traffic enforcement mission.

To curb this problem, I sponsored legislation that was approved by the Legislature to increase the fine for those who fail to register their cars here within 30 days and for

Representative Bill Fromhold

CAPITOL LETTER: Legislative Session Preview

those who fail to obtain a Washington driver's license. I felt this step was necessary because of the nature of our fast growing region. Clark County needs to collect its fair share in order to maintain basic services for its skyrocketing population. Since the 2000 census, we have added almost 50,000 people, making us number one for population increase among all the counties in the state.

Clean Cars: In 2009, Washington State will join California in requiring stricter car emissions standards. As other states adopt clean car laws, car manufacturers will be encouraged to produce fuel efficient cars that will emit less pollution, increase fuel economy and improve air quality.

Ahead of the Curve

Cell Phone Privacy: A new law in Washington State protects cell phone user's privacy. Telephone companies must now obtain your express consent before publishing your wireless number in a directory. You may also add your number to the National Do Not Call Registry by visiting www.donotcall.gov or calling 1-888-382-1222.

